(3) COLLECTION OF LAND REVENUE IN SIX EQUAL INSTALMENTS

Mr. C. SATYANARAYANA CHOUDARI :—" Sir, under Standing Order 33, I beg to move that the consideration of resolutions Nos. 2 to 7 on the agenda be postponed until resolution No. 8 is disposed of. "

Mr. K. A. NACHIYAPPA GOUNDAR :—" I second it. "

The motion was carried and the consideration of resolutions Nos. 2 to 7 was accordingly postponed.

Resolution No. 8 on the agenda was then taken up.

* Mr. C. SATYANARAYANA CHOUDARI :—" Mr. President, Sir, I beg to move the resolution which stands in my name and which runs thus :

> ' *This Council recommends to the Government that the collection of land revenue be extended over six instalments of equal amounts.* '

" Sir, this resolution has become necessary on account of the continued and serious economic depression among the agriculturists for the last two years. A great catastrophe has come upon the people from finance or from the complicated system of credit and currency which in its relation to credit has become dislocated to an alarming extent. A few financiers sitting in New York, London and Paris pursuing their own ends and looking after their own interests have managed to wreck the economic fabric of the whole world, to destroy the fruits of good harvests and the productive accomplishments of human agency. As a result, Sir, prices fall, insecurity spreads and the world goes down steadily into darkest depression. That the ryots of this province are passing through critical times to-day none can dispute. Even last year, Sir, we felt that the depression was so keen that it had reached its lowest level. We felt, Sir, that it could not go lower still. We expected that thereafter the march was bound to be only upwards. But to-day we find that all our calculations, all our expectations are frustrated, baffled. To-day we find, Sir, that the condition of the ryot is becoming worse day by day. The economic position of the ryot is becoming more and more a matter for anxiety. Even during normal times when Mr. Holdsworth thought that he could take Rs. 6 or Rs. 6-4-0 as the permanent average price of a bag of paddy, I, as one who can testify to the position of agriculturists in the country, can say, Sir, that agriculture was not a paying proposition. Agriculture has not even been a self-supporting profession and, if I may say so, agriculture has been a positively losing concern. Now, Sir, it may be asked, if agriculture has really been not paying, why then should so many thousands of people keep to the land? The answer to the question is not far to seek. Ours is an essentially agricultural country. We have no factories; we have no workshops; we have no political freedom to enable us to acquire livings in other countries and to benefit by trade with other countries. Now, that is the secret of the psychology of the Indian ryot. Now, Sir, as I was saying, the ryot of this province has never been a happy being. He is half-fed; he is ill-clad; he can never afford a decent, full meal; he

2nd November 1931] [Mr. C. Satyanarayana Choudari]

can never afford a full covering for his body. Now, Sir, when that is the position of the agriculturist who pays the revenue to keep the administration going, is it not the duty of the Government to get alarmed at the danger of its manhood, of its very man power perishing. I would therefore appeal to the Government in the interests of its own self-preservation, if not out of altruistic considerations, to rise to the occasion, to come to the rescue of the ryot and to do something to give him relief. The condition of the ryot to-day is something like the condition of the man on his death-bed. It is the duty of the Government to render every possible help to give him relief. There are several ways in which the Government can come to the rescue of the ryot. The method suggested in my resolution is the least that can be expected of any responsible Government. There are other ways in which the Government are bound to come to the rescue of the ryots in a situation like this. In fact, Sir, I have given notice of a resolution recommending to the Government remission of 50 per cent of the land revenue. Now, Sir, the condition of the ryot is so bad that I can very easily make out a case for remission of land revenue by 50 per cent. But unfortunately my resolution did not come up in the ballot. Miss Ballot was unfavourable to me. She preferred the hand of the rich Government and rejected the hand of the poor ryot. Well, Sir, if last year the ryot was able to pay the taxes, it was not because he had money available; it was not because he had ready cash at his disposal. It was with the greatest difficulty that the ryots could pay their taxes last year. I know of cases where the ryots were compelled to lay their hands upon the jewels of their ladies, pledge them or sell them to meet the demand for land revenue. Now, Sir, these jewels are exhausted. That source is closed now, and there is nothing left on the person of the ladies of the family of an average ryot except their *tali*. Now, Sir, if the Government should insist upon the payment of land revenue as in normal conditions, it will mean a great hardship to the ryots. The demand for the payment of cesses is made from the month of January. January and February are months, Sir, when the ryot gathers his produce from the field. It is just the time when the produce comes to his hand, and if the Government insists upon the payment of land revenue in those same months as in normal conditions, the Government will be compelling the ryots to bring their produce all at once to the markets. That is just the season when every ryot gets his produce. And if every ryot is compelled to bring his produce to the market, then the law of supply and demand comes into operation with all its vigour. There is more supply than demand, and therefore the ryots get very low prices for their produce. The result of the Government insisting upon the payment of land revenue as in normal conditions would be to compel the ryot to borrow, for his produce at that time would fetch a very very low price only. The consequence of it would be that after paying Government revenue there will be nothing left for the ryot to enable him to live until the next crop becomes available for him. Now, Sir, I would make an appeal to the hon. the Revenue Member not to judge the wealth of the people by the scale of

[Mr. C. Satyanarayana Choudari] [2nd November 1931

the receptions that he is accustomed to in his tours, by the scale of the tea parties that he is accustomed to in his tours. I would appeal to him to go into the spirit of the whole matter, and to take this assurance from me that, after all, things are not so prosperous as they are made to appear to him when he goes about touring in the country parts. The way in which the Revenue subordinates get up these functions, get up these shows makes it impossible for even the hon. the Revenue Member, however well intentioned he may be, to know the real condition of the ryot. This is true of even the District Collectors. The District Collectors also are handicapped in the same way. Now, Sir, these tea parties and grand functions are arranged at the cost of the ryot and the result of it is that these tea parties create the false impression upon the Members of the Government that the people are really rolling in wealth. Now, Sir, this is an unfortunate position for the ryot. By these tea parties and grand receptions that are being arranged at his cost, the ryot is actually made to commit suicide in this way. I would respectfully appeal to the hon. the Revenue Member not to go away with the impression that even in the delta areas there is prosperity. In fact, if I am not revealing a secret, last year when I was talking to the hon. the Revenue Member in company with some other Members of this House in connexion with some question, he said that he was surprised that a deputation should wait on him for giving this concession to the ryot of the delta areas.

3-30 p.m. "He further said that he was under the impression—I do not know, Sir, whether he would remember it, I remember it distinctly—that he was under the impression that it is honey and milk that flowed in the rivers of the deltaic taluks. That he should have carried that impression is an unfortunate thing for the ryot. I could understand how that impression was formed by the hon. the Revenue Member. Our interview with him was about Guntur and Kistna and Godavari districts; I know the grand scale on which he was received and the grand parties that were given to him when he visited those places last year. Probably that was the reason for the impression created on him. I would put my appeal on another basis. It is not safe for the Government to live in the midst of hungry mouths. It is not part of wisdom to allow hungry mouths to grow in large numbers. History tells us what happened when hungry mouths grew in numbers. History tells us that the first thing these hungry mouths do is to devour the Government. Are we not to take lessons from history and guard ourselves against such a danger? This is what is happening in England, in Spain and in Russia. This is what happened in France.

"Now, Sir, I would just mention another matter. We the representatives of the people sitting here have always been anxious and willing to judge the hon. Members on the Treasury Bench on their merits. We have always appreciated their good acts. If the hon. Members sitting on the Treasury Bench expect ungrudging and unstinted support from the representatives of the people sitting here

2nd November 1931] [Mr. C. Satyanarayana Choudari]

in the matter of the administration of the country we have also got a right, Sir, to expect the hon. Members to respond in a sympathetic manner to the appeals that we make on behalf of the people. Constitutionally and temperamentally Indian is an emotional being and his memory is very short. He forgets past wrongs very easily. If any hon. Member sitting on the Treasury Bench thinks that he is unable to command the confidence of the House, is it fair that the entire blame for the responsibility should be laid at the door of the Members of this House? I would just remind the hon. the Revenue Member, Sir, that the charge or the impression that seems to prevail in the Government circles that we are not giving our support to the Government or that we are supporting the Transferred Half to a greater extent than the Reserved Half is not well-founded. I would refer the hon. the Revenue Member to the case of the hon. the Law Member when he was before us in this House with his demands at the budget time last year. Sir, the House felt that the hon. the Law Member was always ready to respond, that he always tried to meet us half-way; and that was the reason why he was able to carry his demands with less difficulty and more ease than the other hon. Members (Laughter). That is an instance which disproves the charge that we have been following a policy of obstructionist tactics. To quote another instance to disprove the charge, Sir, that we are partial to the Transferred Half."

* The hon. the PRESIDENT:—"I wish the hon. Member returns to the question of the six instalments."

Mr. C. SATYANARAYANA CHOUDARI:—"Now, Sir, I am coming to the point. I am making an appeal to the hon. the Revenue Member to review what our attitude has been to see how we have been appreciating good acts on the part of the Government so that we may assure him that if he is prepared to accept my resolution and help the ryot, he will not be forgotten at the time when he appears before this House at the time of the next budget comes on.

"Just one word more with regard to the charge that we have been partial to the Transferred Half. Take the case of the Education Minister. When he was before the House with his Excise Demands, everyone of us criticised him. That shows that we, the representatives of the people here, are always anxious to appreciate anything good done by the Government and to give praise where it is due and criticise when hon. Members deserve it. Therefore I would appeal to the hon. the Revenue Member to earn our gratitude and the gratitude of the people by his rising to the occasion and by viewing this resolution in a spirit of sympathy and by doing something to save the ryots from complete annihilation."

* Mr. V. M. RAMASWAMI MUDALIYAR:—"I rise to second this resolution moved by my Friend the hon. Member from Guntur. I do so with a full sense of responsibility of what is proper for the Government to do. I hold that the resolution is an innocuous one from the

[Mr. V. M. Ramaswami Mudaliyar] [2nd November 1931

point of view of Government also. By accepting the resolution the Government do not lose any portion of the revenue that they are entitled to expect from the land. To some of us—because I know the House is not constituted entirely of elected representatives—to whom it is given to more with the people it seems to be our duty to bring before this House the gravity of the situation, the great economic difficutlies under which the peasants of our country and our Presidency in particular are labouring under at present. Suffice it to say that, on account of the precipitous fall in the price of produce, persons who have been hit hardest have been the unfortunate ryots. Even last year the effect of the fall in price of food stuffs has been such as to compel the ryot to have recourse to the pledging of jewels of his family and in most cases of the lands, for purposes of paying the kist. Sir, I could speak with first hand knowledge of these conditions, because I happen to represent in this House a rural constituency and I would urge upon the consideration of the Government the necessity for giving the peasant a chance to live. The only way in which the Government can do this, without any inconvenience, is to receive the kist amount which is due to the Government in easy instalments. I do not propose to refer at any great length to the chronic indebtedness for which the Indian peasant is so notorious. It is a fact which is within the competence of the Government to realize and coupled with that there is the other fact that the Indian peasant has no economic reserve whatsoever and that it is impossible for him to put by any money. Nay, it is even difficult for him to continue to keep his body and soul together from and out of the produce of his land. These facts when taken into consideration along with the other fact that even at present there is no certainty of what the prices are going to be—and a study of the index figures does not disclose which way the prices are moving in the coming two months—I think it is necessary that a resolution of this sort whereby certain concessions are given to the ryot enabling him to pay the kists in six instalments instead of four is absolutely necessary and it is our duty, Sir, to bring this fact home to the notice of the Government so that they can extend at least this concession. In this connection it should be remembered that the incidence of land revenue was originally based on a certain proportion of the actual produce raised on the land; it will be easy if to-day that original basis of land taxation is remembered and, should the Government choose to collect taxation *in kind* and not in money every agriculturist in our Presidency would welcome that mode of payment of the tax. But to revert to that form of taxation may be difficult, and, because the Government has fixed as tax, a certain proportion of the expected profit, without any relation to the actual cost of production prevailing at present, the resolution gains further force. I do not think any further argument is necessary because I am sure most of the hon. Members realize the importance of the resolution and certain other hon. Members may be very anxious to express their opinion on the point. I have therefore great pleasure in seconding the resolution moved by my hon. Friend."

2nd November 1931]

* The hon. Mr. A. Y. G. CAMPBEL:—"Mr. President, Sir, at the present time in most districts land revenue is collected in four instalments. In some cases it is collected in three and in a very small area in two. Certain definite principles have been laid down to be borne in mind when fixing the kistbandi and one of the important principles is that no instalment should be collected before the ordinary time of harvest of the tract concerned and before the ryots have had a chance of selling their produce. The kistbandi is re-examined on every occasion when the re-settlement of the district takes place by the Settlement Officer who listens to and reports on any representations that may be made to him in that connexion and the Government re-consider the kistbandi then in force. Now, Sir, I am somewhat disappointed in the speech of the hon. Mover as I expected to hear from him some reasons why it is preferable to have six instalments rather than four. He gave a description of the condition of the ryot which seemed to me somewhat exaggerated and as unduly pessimistic. The more instalments we have the more trouble there is in connexion with the collection of the land revenue not only to the Government officers but also to those who have to pay. It means that they are worried six times by the village officers instead of four times in regard to their payment of the land revenue. Further, once the ryot has sold his produce, there is no reason why he should not pay the Government dues and, if the payment is postponed, there is a danger of his spending his money in other ways such as on marriage ceremonies, etc. Well, Sir, these are matters which have to be considered. It was suggested by the Mover of the resolution, I believe, that by collecting the revenue in four kists the prices are necessarily lowered because too much produce is forced on the market. During the last season when the economic depression became evident I ordered that this particular matter should be specially watched. We watched the prices at the principal markets.

"Those prices are determined by world conditions. Now, if the price in the district bears a constant relation to that world price making due allowance for distance from the district to the exporting centres and any other matters that should be allowed for such as merchant's profits, etc., if that price in the district bears a constant relation to the world market price, then obviously we are not forcing upon the market more produce than it can absorb. That is to say, that amount of produce would be sold whether we were demanding the revenue or not. In one case, on the recommendation of the Collector, the kists were postponed in the hope that prices would rise. As a matter of fact, the prices fell. So, far from being beneficial to the ryot, the action taken had the contrary effect, because the ryot was not able to get as much money for his produce which he would have got at the time when the kist was really due. So, Sir, it does not necessarily follow that because we increase the number of kist instalments we should be benefiting the ryot. It is a matter of speculation whether the price will go up or not. On the other hand, there is the disadvantage that the ryot will be worried on more occasions for his revenue. 3-45 p.m.

[Mr. A. Y. G. Campbell] [2nd November 1931

"Now, Sir, the Economic Enquiry Committee which the Government appointed in the early part of this year made a recommendation to the following effect:—

'In consideration of the fact that generally the harvest time is the time when it is least advantageous for a ryot to sell his crops, although we are aware that to some extent the crops are the security for the payment of kists, and unless the Government collect it then, there is some slight risk that the ryot will sell his crop to pay his other debts and neglect to pay his kists rendering its recovery more difficult, we recommend that the proposal to defer the kist dates until some little time after the harvest should receive the careful consideration of the Government.'

"As I have already said it is one of our standing principles that the first kist should be demanded only after the usual harvest. But, Sir, on this recommendation of the committee we referred the whole question to the Board of Revenue and have asked it to consider and report whether the kistbandi requires revision in any district or in any portion of a district. It is therefore open to hon. Members of this House or to anyone else to make representations to the Collector of the district or to the Board of Revenue to make an alteration of the kistbandi."

The resolution was put and carried.

(4) HALF-FEE CONCESSION TO STUDENTS OF MUSLIM, BACKWARD AND DEPRESSED COMMUNITIES

Mr. ABDUL HAMEED KHAN:—"Mr. President, I beg the leave of the House to move Resolution No. 2 regarding half-fee concession to Muslim students, etc., which stands in the name of Mr. S. M. K. Beyabani Sahib, on the agenda."

Diwan Bahadur C. S. RATNASABHAPATI MUDALIYAR:—"I move under Standing Order 33 that the consideration of Resolutions Nos. 2 to 7 be held over and that precedence be given to Resolution No. 9, which deals with the Madras Co-operative Milk Supply Union."

Mr. SAMI VENKATACHALAM CHETTI:—"I am afraid, Sir, there are far too many requests to change the order of business, so that those gentlemen in whose names the other resolutions are ballotted are put at a severe handicap. As a matter of fact, I expected that my resolution with regard to the constitution of a committee to investigate into jail conditions would be given preference. Having regard to the fact that one hon. Member had already been given a chance to go against the order in the agenda, I do not think it is prudent for me to press my request."

Mr. K. KOTI REDDI:—"Under Standing Order 33, I move that Resolution No. 7 regarding the grant of loans to the ryot population be taken up immediately."

* The hon. the PRESIDENT:—"I am afraid there have been too many deviations from the agenda. At this rate, I should like to go on with the agenda as it is. I take it that Mr. Abdul Hameed Khan has got the leave of the House to move Resolution No. 2 standing in the name of Mr. Beyabani Sahib."

The House signified its consent.